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ABSTRACT

The report focuses on students (a Representative Group and a Black Group) who persisted at the University of Maryland, College Park (UMCP) to graduation and discusses some of the factors traditionally associated with persistence to graduation. The report showed that significant numbers of students who have departed the university did so while in good academic standing. It was also discovered that students (especially black students) who lived on campus during their later years at UMCP were more likely to complete their degree program at College Park than students who lived with their parents that year. Discussions with UMCP graduates concerning their retrospective assessments of non-academic issues found that nearly three-quarters of the UMCP graduates found great satisfaction in their friendships and interpersonal relationships, in settling on their major, and in confronting day to day problems. Nearly all UMCP graduates were satisfied with their overall college experience, and two-thirds agreed that they expected to be identified as UMCP alumni. These findings notwithstanding, student departure prior to graduation raised issues involving the university's responsibility (course access, adequate advising) and student responsibility (motivation, personal investment, competing agendas). Appendixes provide data on enrollment patterns by academic standing for the Representative Group and the Black Group. (GLR)

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# MLS RESEARCH HIGHLIGHTS

Maryland Longitudinal Study

RESEARCH REPORT #16

## THE UMCP GRADUATE PERSPECTIVE

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This is the final in a series of sixteen reports, based on data from the Maryland Longitudinal Study, that examine issues concerning undergraduates at UMCP.

Students who matriculate at UMCP and leave before earning their degree are a source of concern to the University community. An examination of their academic behaviors suggests that many who leave do *not* do so because they are underprepared for the academic rigors of the University, for indeed, many leave in good academic standing. However, many who leave UMCP in good academic standing lag behind in the accumulation of credits needed to complete their degree program in a timely fashion. In the process of self-scrutiny, UMCP needs to examine what factors *under its control* are blocking the normal progression of undergraduate students, in order to encourage qualified students to complete their program at UMCP.

The present report discusses some of the factors traditionally associated with persistence to graduation. For example, it is shown that while SAT scores are good predictors of academic success at UMCP, they are less reliable as predictors of graduation from UMCP. In terms of financial support, MLS students in the Representative Group who persisted at UMCP until graduation were less likely than students who left before degree completion at College Park to have family incomes below $30,000 a year (in 1980). This was not true, however, for black MLS students: there were no significant differences in the financial status of black students who completed their degree program at UMCP and those who did not.

Students in the Representative Group who lived on campus their second year at UMCP were more likely to complete their degree program at College Park than students who lived with their parents that year. This pattern was not as pronounced among black students. Interestingly, among black students who completed their degree program here, there was an increase, in Years 3 and 4 (compared to Years 1 and 2), of students who lived in a residence hall and considered their experience there beneficial. Conversely, the number of UMCP black graduates who lived with their parents in Years 3 and 4 and considered that experience beneficial declined, suggesting that on-campus living for advanced level black students is interpersonally and socially gratifying. Evidence of frequent feelings of depression during the second year of college among students who ultimately did not continue at UMCP suggests that what was once dismissed as "sophomore slump" may be a good precursor of a student's decision to withdraw from the University.

The fourth section of this report includes discussion of the retrospective views of UMCP graduates, including students' perceptions of academic issues, broken down by the academic division in which the students' majors resided. Academic issues discussed include when students first declared their major and how many times they changed their major; their degree of satisfaction with the typical number of students in their classes; the amount of registration problems they encountered; their degree of satisfaction with the quality of instruction they received and with the coursework both in and outside their major; their views about accessibility of faculty to students; and the proportion who would recommend their academic department to a friend with similar interests.

The final section discusses UMCP graduates' retrospective assessments of non-academic issues. Over three-quarters of the UMCP graduates found great satisfaction in their friendships and interpersonal relationships, in settling on their major, and in confronting day to day problems. These aspects of college life, while not directly related to academic performance, may be affected by the personal and interpersonal growth being encouraged and stimulated by the college experience. Fewer than half saw a relationship between participation in organized co-curricular activities and enhanced personal, professional, or vocational development. That such a relationship can exist and be beneficial in both a short-term and long-term way needs to be stressed.

Nearly all UMCP graduates were satisfied with their overall college experience, and two-thirds agreed that they expected to be identified as UMCP alumni. The majority reported they were living within a 20 mile radius of the College Park campus, suggesting that Maryland citizens' tax dollars are being used to educate Maryland's future employees and citizens.

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Maryland Longitudinal Study Steering Committee
Division of Student Affairs
The University of Maryland College Park
Summer 1990

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The Maryland Longitudinal Study (MLS) is a research undertaking of the Division of Student Affairs at The University of Maryland at College Park. A significant number of Student Affairs staff have been involved in the study since its inception. A Steering Committee appointed by the Vice President for Student Affairs has been responsible for the methodology, data collection, and management of this project. These individuals are listed in Appendix A of the MLS report entitled "The Maryland Longitudinal Study—A Descriptive Overview: The Study's Purpose, Goals, Features, Participants, and Design."

## I. STUDENT ENROLLMENT PATTERNS

University records enable the tracking of students who are enrolled at UMCP each semester. As long as students remain enrolled at UMCP their registration and academic behaviors can be studied. More difficult to determine, however, is what happens to students who discontinue enrollment at UMCP. Through students' requests for transcripts, the University can receive an impression of the degree of transfer activity away from UMCP. However, since the degree of undergraduate attrition is a concern at the University of Maryland at College Park, it is important for the University to become more systematically knowledgeable about who leaves, as well as who stays, and to examine reasons why students who are academically qualified to stay at UMCP, leave.

The purpose of the present section is to examine both University and MLS self-report data to obtain a clearer picture of what happened to study participants[1] who left UMCP before completing the undergraduate degree.

Appendix A and B report these figures in greater detail and in tabular form.

### A. DEPARTURES DURING OR IMMEDIATELY AFTER THE FRESHMAN YEAR

#### Representative Group

University records indicate that 28 students in the Representative Group were registered at UMCP for the fall 1980 semester and did not return for the spring semester. Of those, 54% (n = 15) were in good standing when they left; 46% (n = 13) were on academic probation.

Fifty-eight students in the Representative Group completed their freshman year at UMCP and did not return the following fall. Forty-five percent (n = 26) left in good academic standing; 10% (n = 6) were on academic probation; and 45% (n = 26) had been academically dismissed.

Of the 86 students in the Representative Group who left UMCP during or immediately after the freshman year, 8% returned to UMCP for the following spring semester; at least 40% transferred elsewhere; at least 27% were nonstudents a year later (that is, they were not enrolled in an institution of higher education); and MLS was unable to contact the remaining 26% and hence could not determine their enrollment status.

#### Black Group

University records indicate that 35 students in the Black Group were enrolled at UMCP for the fall semester of their freshman year and did not return for the spring semester. Thirty-one percent (n = 11) left in good academic standing; 69% (n = 24) were on academic probation.

Eighty-three students in the Black Group finished their freshman year and did not return to UMCP the following fall. Twenty percent (n = 17) left in good academic standing; 17% (n = 14) had been placed on academic probation, and 63% (n = 52) had been academically dismissed.

Of the 118 students in the Black Group who left UMCP during or immediately after the freshman year, 10% returned to UMCP for the following spring semester; at least 39% transferred elsewhere; at least 19% were nonstudents a year later; and MLS was unable to contact the remaining 31% and hence could not determine their enrollment status.

### B. DEPARTURES DURING OR IMMEDIATELY AFTER THE SECOND YEAR

#### Representative Group

University enrollment figures indicate that 35 students in the Representative Group completed the fall semester of Year Two and did not return to UMCP for the spring semester. Thirty-seven percent (n = 13) left in good academic standing, 17% (n = 6) were on academic probation, and 46% (n = 16) were academically dismissed.

Fifty-three students in the Representative Group were enrolled at UMCP for the spring semester of Year Two and did not return to UMCP the following fall. Fifty-eight percent (n = 31) of those were in good academic standing when they left. Twenty-one percent (n = 11) had been placed on academic probation, and another 21% (n = 11) had been academically dismissed.

Of the 88 students in the Representative Group who left UMCP during or immediately after Year Two, 10% returned to UMCP the following spring semester; at least 41% transferred elsewhere; at least 28% were nonstudents a year later; and MLS was unable to determine the enrollment status of the remaining 20%.

#### Black Group

University records indicate that 35 students in the Black Group completed the fall semester of Year Two at UMCP and did not return to UMCP for the spring semester. Twenty-six percent (n = 9) left in good standing; 26% (n = 9) left on academic probation; and 48% (n = 17) were academically dismissed.

Thirty-three students in the Black Group left UMCP after the spring semester of Year Two. Of these, 42% (n = 14) left in good academic standing; 27% (n = 9) left on academic probation, and 30% (n = 10) were academically dismissed.

Of the 68 students in the Black Group who left UMCP during or immediately after Year 2, 1% returned to UMCP the following spring semester; at least 37% transferred to another institution; at least 25% were nonstudents a year later; and MLS was unable to determine the enrollment status of the remaining 37%.

### C. DEPARTURES DURING OR IMMEDIATELY AFTER THE THIRD YEAR

#### Representative Group

Seventeen students in the Representative Group completed the fall semester of Year Three and did not return to UMCP for the spring semester. Fifty-three percent (n = 9) left in good academic standing; 6% (n = 1) were on academic probation; and 41% (n = 7) were academically dismissed.

Twenty-four students in the Representative Group left UMCP after the spring semester of Year 3. Of those, 46% (n = 11) left in good academic standing, 25% (n = 6) left on academic probation, and 29% (n = 7) had been academically dismissed.

Of the 41 students in the Representative Group who left UMCP during or immediately after Year Three, 19% returned to UMCP the following spring semester; at least 24% transferred elsewhere; at least 32% were nonstudents the next year; and MLS was unable to determine the enrollment status of the remaining 24%.

**Black Group**

Nineteen students in the Black Group completed the fall semester of Year Three and did not return to UMCP for the spring semester. Twenty-one percent (n = 4) left in good academic standing; 42% (n = 8) were on academic probation; and 37% (n = 7) had been academically dismissed.

Nineteen students (6%) in the Black Group left UMCP after the spring semester of Year Three. Of those, 32% (n = 6) did so in good standing, 32% (n = 6) had been placed on academic probation, and 36% (n = 7) were academically dismissed.

Of the 38 students in the Black Group who left UMCP during or immediately after Year Three, 13% returned to UMCP the following spring semester; at least 24% transferred elsewhere; at least 32% were nonstudents a year later; and MLS was unable to determine the enrollment status of the remaining 45%.

Many share a belief that students who matriculate at UMCP and leave before completing the undergraduate degree do so because they are underprepared for the academic rigor of the degree programs, and consequently can't earn the grades necessary to remain here. As this section has demonstrated, many of the students who leave UMCP before graduating leave in good academic standing—that is, with a cumulative grade point average at or above the minimum required for graduation. The next section explores the credit level of these students in order to uncover patterns which may have contributed to their departure.

## II. STUDENTS WHO LEFT UMCP IN GOOD ACADEMIC STANDING

*The four year degree assumes at least fifteen credits earned each semester for four concurrent years.* As Table 1 depicts, however, the credit level of students who leave UMCP in good standing lags behind this ideal. For example, MLS students who were registered at UMCP their first year but did not return to UMCP the following fall had earned an average of 23 credits among Representative Group students, and 20 credits among Black Group students. This compares with an ideal credit level of 30 credits completed by the end of a student's first year of college.

Similarly, students who were registered for the second fall semester after matriculation but did not return to UMCP for the following spring semester had earned an average of 35 credits among Representative Group students, and 32 credits among Black Group students, compared to an ideal credit level after three semesters of 45 credits.

Table 1 also depicts the average cumulative grade point average of students leaving in good academic standing.

**Table 1**

**CUMULATIVE GRADE POINT AVERAGES AND CREDIT LAG* OF STUDENTS LEAVING UMCP IN GOOD ACADEMIC STANDING**

| Last Semester at UMCP | Ideal credit level | REPRESENTATIVE GROUP Cumulative GPA | Credit lag | BLACK GROUP Cumulative GPA | Credit lag |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Semester #2 | 30 | 2.29 | – 7 | 2.05 | – 10 |
| Semester #3 | 45 | 2.34 | – 10 | 2.34 | – 13 |
| Semester #4 | 60 | 2.8 | – 4 | 2.80 | – 11 |
| Semester #5 | 75 | 2.56 | – 6 | 2.56 | – 16 |
| Semester #6 | 90 | 3.05 | – 4 | 3.05 | – 10 |

*Credit lag = ideal credit level minus actual credit level

Table 1 demonstrates that students who leave UMCP in good academic standing are many credit hours behind the ideal credit level for progress through the degree program, and that this is particularly true for black students. It also shows that these are not marginal students leaving because they are barely earning the minimum grade point average required for graduation.

This pattern has intensified over the years. According to a recent in-house administrative report prepared by the Retention Steering Committee, the majority of students who matriculated at UMCP between 1984 and 1987 who left UMCP after completing at least three semesters and yet before earning their degree were in good academic standing before they left, and were behind their fellow matriculants in accumulated credits completed. Once the University admits a student into a degree program, responsibility is placed both on the institution to provide support services that will enable its students to achieve their educational goals, and on the students to take advantage of the resources the University has to offer them. As UMCP strives to increase graduation rates, it needs to examine if factors under its control, such as course access and careful advising, are blocking the normal progression of undergraduate students through the degree program.

## III. STUDENTS WHO PERSIST AT UMCP UNTIL GRADUATION

According to University records, the proportion of students in the Representative Group who graduated from the University of Maryland at College Park within 9 years of their matriculation in the fall of 1980 was 61%. The proportion of students in the Black Group who graduated from the University of Maryland at College Park within 9 years of their matriculation in the fall of 1980 was 35%. This section discusses some of the factors traditionally associated with persistence to graduation, and reflects self-reported characteristics and behaviors of MLS students who graduated from UMCP.

***Academic background and persistence at UMCP to graduation***

High school grade point averages and scholastic aptitude scores are traditionally used both as admissions criteria and as indicators of the academic capabilities of the incoming student body. In many cases they are also used as predictors of persistence to graduation.

In the Representative Group, 84% of the students who persisted at UMCP to graduation reported having earned an average grade in high school of B or higher. This was true for 69% of the students in the Representative Group who did not persist at UMCP until graduation, a statistically significant difference. In the Black Group as well, there were statistically significant differences in average high school grades between black students who graduated from UMCP and those who did not. Seventy-seven percent of the black students who graduated from UMCP reported an average high school grade of B or better, while this was true of 58% of the black students who did not graduate from UMCP.

That there is a relationship between scholastic aptitude (as measured by the Scholastic Aptitude Test) and academic persistence is not clear. One-third of the students in the Representative Group who matriculated at UMCP and *did not graduate* from College Park earned a combined SAT score of 1000 or higher. The fact that high scores on the Scholastic Achievement Test are not reliable predictors of persistence to graduation is in part explained by the proportion of students in good academic standing each year who, despite their high SAT scores, leave the campus before completing their degree program.

On the other hand, in the Black Group, nearly half (48%) of the students who graduated from UMCP earned average combined SAT scores of *below 800.* In the effort to increase the graduation rates of undergraduates who matriculate at UMCP as first-time full-time students, it is crucial to keep in mind that while high aptitude scores may be good predictors of *academic success* at the college level, they (particularly SAT scores) are less reliable as predictors of *persistence to graduation* at the college of matriculation.

***Financial support in Years 1 & 2 and persistence at UMCP to graduation***

There was a statistically significant relationship between financial status in Year 1 and persistence to graduation from UMCP among students in the Representative Group. For example, 52% of the students who did not graduate from UMCP and 72% of those who did reported a combined parent income (in 1980) of $30,000 or higher. Further, there were differences in major sources of financial support for the two subgroups in Year 1. One-quarter of the non-graduates and 15% of the UMCP graduates reported they relied on their own personal income or savings during their freshman year. And 20% of the non-graduates relied on scholarships for a major portion of their financial support, while this was true for 13% of the UMCP graduates.

In Year 2 the differences between the two subgroups on reliance on personal savings/income evened out. Approximately 28% of each subgroup reported they relied on their personal savings or income as a major source of financial support, and a similar proportion of each relied heavily on loans their second year. The differences between UMCP graduates and non-graduates concerning reliance on scholarships persisted, however.

In the Black Group, there was no statistically significant evidence of a relationship between financial status either in Year 1 or in Year 2, and retention to graduation. Forty-two percent of the UMCP black graduates and 38% of the black non-graduates reported their parents' combined income (in 1980) was greater than or equal to $30,000. Approximately half of the graduates and non-graduates relied on their parents for a major portion of their financial support their first and second years. Nor were there statistically significant differences between UMCP graduates and non-graduates on other sources of financial support (e.g., personal income or savings, scholarships, loans).

***Place of residence in Years 1 and 2***

There have been reports in the retention literature that students who live on campus are less likely to leave college before earning their degree. However there was no apparent relationship between place of residence *during the freshman year* and persistence to graduation at UMCP, in the Representative Group. Fifty-eight percent of the UMCP graduates and 51% of the non-graduates reported they lived on campus their first year at UMCP. The following year, however, there were statistically significant differences between the two subgroups. Forty-one percent of the respondents in the Representative Group lived with their parents in Year 2; of those, just over half (52%) ultimately graduated from UMCP. Another 41% lived in residence halls in Year 2; of those, 76% ultimately graduated from UMCP.

A similar pattern appeared, although less extremely, in the Black Group, where 79% of those who ultimately graduated from UMCP, and 68% of those who did not graduate from UMCP, lived on campus during the first year. In Year 2, 46% of the Black Group respondents reported living with their parents; of those, under one-quarter (23%) ultimately graduated from UMCP. Forty-two percent reported living in a residence hall in Year 2; of those, 57% ultimately graduated from UMCP.

In order to understand students' feelings about the experiential benefits of living in their particular residence (i.e., at home, on campus), UMCP graduates were asked on the Graduate Survey to evaluate, retrospectively, each year's residence while they were undergraduates. (See Table 2.)

The proportion of UMCP graduates in the Representative Group who felt their residence had been beneficial to them was fairly stable across the years, *regardless of place of residence.* There was more fluxuation among UMCP graduates in the Black Group in their evaluation of their residence experience each year. Black students who eventually graduated from UMCP and who lived in a residence hall their first or second year were not very likely to report that the residential experience was beneficial. On the other hand, black students who lived with their parents during those early years tended to have found living at home beneficial.

This pattern reversed itself in Years 3 and 4, where there was an increase in the proportion of black students who lived in the residence halls who found the experience beneficial, and a decrease in the proportion of black students who lived with their parents during their third and/or fourth years who found the experience beneficial.

**Table 2**

**PROPORTION OF UMCP GRADUATES WHO FOUND THEIR RESIDENCE BENEFICIAL**

| Residence | Year 1 | Year 2 | Year 3 | Year 4 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| REP GROUP | | | | |
| residence hall | 61% | 61% | 73% | 68% |
| lived with parents | 70 | 69 | 69 | 72 |
| BLACK GROUP | | | | |
| residence hall | 44 | 48 | 73 | 83 |
| lived with parents | 78 | 80 | 67 | 64 |

Black students living on a predominantly white campus during their early undergraduate years may feel alienated and socially isolated in the residence halls, while black students living at home, in their community, may experience more emotional support and perhaps more structure. However, by their third and fourth years, these students may have become affiliated with the University community, and be more comfortable living away from home. As a result, they may find living on campus interpersonally and socially beneficial.

***Emotional adjustment in Years 1 and 2***

In the Representative Group, UMCP graduates appear to have been more emotionally adjusted than non-graduates during their first two years of college. While there were essentially no differences between them on reported frequency of feelings of self-confidence the first year (38% for non-graduates and 34% for UMCP graduates), non-graduates were significantly more likely (21%) than UMCP graduates (11%) to report frequent feelings of depression their freshman year.

By the second year, the differences between UMCP graduates and non-graduates in emotional adjustment were clearer. Not only was the proportion of non-graduates who reported rarely or never feeling self-confident higher (13% as opposed to 6% for UMCP graduates), the proportions reporting frequent feelings of depression were 24% among non-graduates and 14% among UMCP graduates.

In the Black Group, non-graduates had a slightly greater tendency than did UMCP graduates to report frequent feelings of self-confidence (46% vs 39%) and depression (23% vs 16%). By the second year, while the differences once again were not statistically significant, non-graduates continued to be more likely (25%) than UMCP graduates (16%) to report frequent feelings of depression. At the same time, they became less likely than UMCP graduates to report frequent feelings of self-confidence.

It would seem that what was once referred to—and casually dismissed—as "sophomore slump" may be more significant in terms of retention than recognized to date. Students experiencing frequent feelings of depression and low levels of self-confidence their second year of college are apt to leave the University before earning their degree and are exhibiting emotional behaviors that need to be attended to in order to facilitate degree completion here.

## IV. A RETROSPECTIVE VIEW BY UMCP GRADUATES

MLS students who earned their baccalaureate degree from College Park were asked to complete a Graduate Survey. A series of questions on the Graduate Survey asked graduates to look back and assess various aspects of college life. It is important to keep in mind the limitations inherent in survey data before reading the results. For example, surveys tend to reduce a rich and complex set of experiences to a set of numbers. Further, ratings measured retrospectively may succumb to tendencies to romanticize or to tarnish recollections. Despite these limitations, however, the information gathered through the Graduate Survey, reflecting graduates' college experiences and perceptions at UMCP during the early and mid-'80s, offer a basis for increased understanding of the undergraduate experience at College Park. Because of the small number of black MLS participants who completed the Graduate Survey, the discussion in this section is not broken down into Representative Group and Black Group analyses, but rather reflects the views of *all MLS students who graduated from UMCP and completed the Graduate Survey.*

### A. ACADEMIC ISSUES

A major reorganization of the structure of academic colleges and departments occurred in the fall semester of 1986. The findings reported here are grouped according to the Division structure which existed while the MLS study was being completed. Nevertheless, insights can be gained from the perceptions of the students who were majors in these Divisions which are useful in the effort to enhance the undergraduate experience at College Park. Appendix C reports these findings in tabular form.

The breakdown across Divisions of the UMCP graduates who completed the Graduate Survey was as follows:

| | |
|---|---|
| AGLS | 7% |
| MPSE | 17% |
| BSOS | 40% |
| A & H | 21% |
| HCR | 15% |

#### *Agriculture and Life Sciences*

Eighty-three percent of the Agriculture and Life Sciences (AGLS) majors who completed the Graduate Survey had decided on a major before they matriculated at UMCP. Over half (57%) shifted their major at least once while in college.

AGLS majors were the most likely of all majors to report having had no registration problems (71%). Fifty-seven percent were satisfied with the typical number of students in their classes. They were also the most satisfied of all majors with the quality of the instruction they received (79%), and with the coursework in their major field (86%). Fifty percent were satisfied with the coursework outside their major field. Sixty-four percent felt the faculty had carefully prepared for their classes.

Ninety-two percent felt they knew a faculty member well enough to ask for a letter of recommendation. However, 29% felt that access to faculty by students was satisfying. Fifty-seven percent reported they would recommend their academic department to a friend with similar interests.

At the time they completed the Graduate Survey, over three-quarters of the AGLS majors were employed. Thirty-eight percent had obtained their current position before graduation. Nearly one-quarter reported they had their job as an undergraduate and continued with it after graduation. Another 15% obtained their position just prior to graduation.

#### *Math, Physical Sciences and Engineering*

Over three-quarters of the majors in Math, Physical Sciences and Engineering (MPSE) who responded to the Graduate Survey had decided on a major before entering UMCP. Fifty-six percent stayed with their original choice of major, while 44% shifted their major at least one time.

Half of the MPSE majors reported having had no registration problems. Only 26% were satisfied with the typical number of students in their classes. However, 81% were satisfied with the coursework in their major field; 72%, with the coursework outside their major field; and 69% were satisfied with the quality of instruction they received.

Just over half the MPSE major (53%) felt the faculty had carefully prepared for their classes. Only 19% were satisfied with accessibility of faculty members. Indeed, MPSE majors were the most likely of the majors to report they knew no faculty member well enough to ask for a letter of recommendation (22%). Nevertheless, 72% of MPSE majors would recommend their academic department to a friend with similar interests—the most likely of the majors to so report.

Over 90% of MPSE majors were employed at the time they completed the Graduate Survey. Sixty-nine percent had obtained their position before graduation—by far the most likely of the majors to have done so. Just under 20% had their position as an undergraduate and continued in it after graduation. Half obtained their position just prior to graduation.

#### *Business and Social Sciences*

Sixty-one percent of Business and Social Sciences (BSOS) majors completing the Graduate Survey had decided on a major while still in high school. Only 28% made no changes in their declared major during their college career.

Fifty-three percent of the BSOS majors reported having had no registration problems while at UMCP. Only 37%, however, were satisfied by the typical number of students in their classes.

Seventy-four percent were satisfied with the coursework in their major field, while almost as many (68%) were satisfied with the coursework outside their major. Fifty-four percent felt the faculty had carefully prepared for their classes.

Only 30% were satisfied by accessibility of faculty members to students. However, 88% felt they knew a faculty member well enough to ask for a letter of recom-

mentation. Sixty-six percent of BSOS majors reported they would recommend their academic department to a friend with similar interests.

Ninety percent of BSOS majors were employed at the time they completed the Graduate Survey. Slightly under half (45%) had obtained their current position before graduation. Only 13% had held their position as undergraduates and continued with it after graduation, while 32% obtained their position just prior to graduation.

***Arts and Humanities***

Sixty-six percent of the Arts and Humanities (A & H) majors completing the Graduate Survey had decided on their major while still in high school. Only 33% made no shifts in their major during their college career at UMCP.

Just over one-third (37%) reported having had registration problems. Sixty percent were satisfied with the typical number of students in their classes.

While over three-quarters of A & H majors were satisfied by the quality of instruction in their major field (77%), fewer were satisfied by the coursework in their major field (69%) and outside their major field (59%).

Ninety percent of the A & H majors reported they knew at least one faculty member well enough to ask for a useful letter of recommendation. However, only one-third (32%) found satisfaction in the accessibility of faculty members to students. Fifty-four percent reported they would recommend their academic department to a friend with similar interests.

Ninety percent of the A & H majors were employed at the time they completed the Graduate Survey. Half had obtained the position before graduation, one-quarter continuing with the position they had held as an undergraduate, and another quarter obtaining their position just prior to graduation.

***Human and Community Resources***

Fifty-nine percent of the Human and Community Resources (HCR) majors completing the Graduate Survey had decided on a major before entering UMCP. Thirty-eight percent made no shifts in their major during their undergraduate years at UMCP.

Fifty-two percent reported they had experienced no registration problems. Fifty-two percent were satisfied with the typical number of students in their classes.

Two-thirds of the HCR majors reported they were satisfied with the quality of instruction they had received at UMCP. Over three-quarters (76%) were satisfied with the coursework in their major field, while fewer than half (45%) were satisfied with the coursework outside their major field. In fact, HCR majors were the least likely of the majors to have found the coursework outside their major satisfying. Fifty-five percent of HCR majors reported they would recommend their major to a friend with similar interests.

Eighty-six percent of the HCR majors were employed at the time they completed the Graduate Survey. Only 34% had obtained their position before graduation. Half of those continued with a job they had held as undergraduates and half obtained their position just prior to graduation.

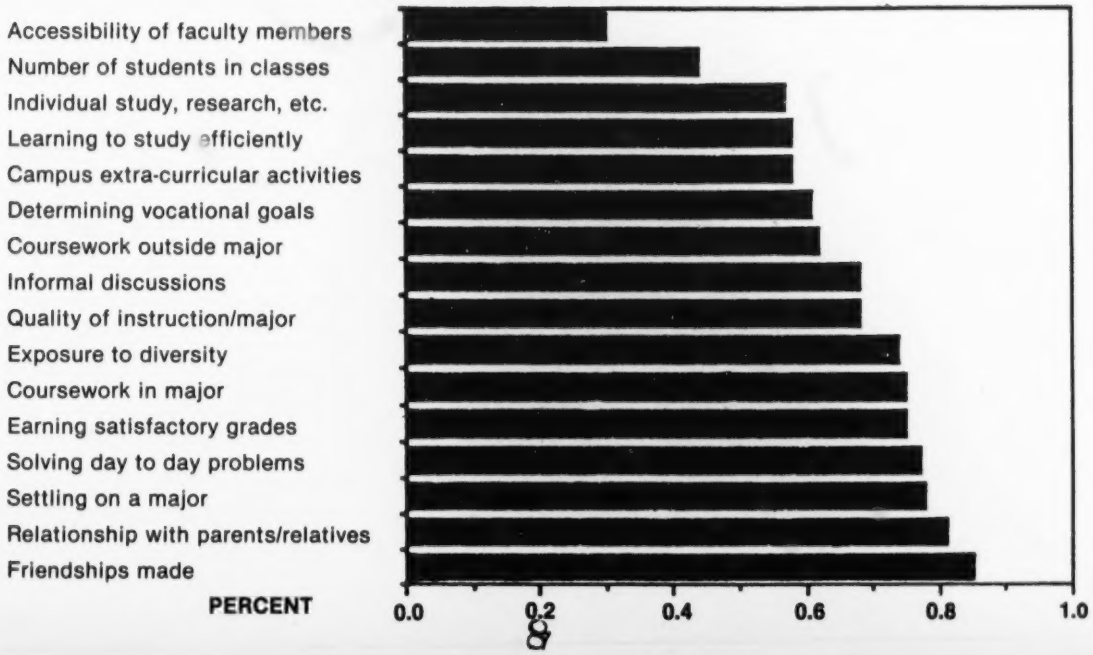
## B. NON-ACADEMIC ISSUES

Goals of higher education—particularly a liberal arts education—encompass a variety of skills and developmental areas. During the years in which a student is an undergraduate, it is traditionally expected that changes will occur not only in the student's knowledge level within and beyond the student's academic field, but also in the student's personal identity and interpersonal competence. In this section, UMCP graduates' retrospective assessments of some of these changes will be discussed.

Over three-quarters of the UMCP graduates completing the Graduate Survey found great satisfaction in friendships made during their college years (85%), in their relationships with their parents during college (81%), in settling on their major (78%), and in solving day to day problems (77%). These aspects of college life, while not directly related to the University, can be affected by the personal and interpersonal growth being stimulated by the college experience.

**Figure 1**

**ASPECTS OF COLLEGE LIFE WHICH WERE SOURCES OF SATISFACTION**



Fewer than half of the UMCP graduates completing the Graduate Survey saw major gains in their cultural, aesthetic development (41%) or in their level of humanism and altruism (39%). The lack of gains in those areas of development may be explained by lag time between one's college experience and increases in these areas, or by a lack of a relationship between the undergraduate experience and cultural/aesthetic development.

Eighty-six percent of UMCP graduates reported substantial increases in their knowledge, technical skills and competencies needed in their (future) career. Fewer than half, however, saw a relationship between participation in organized extracurricular activities and enhanced personal or professional development (46%) or enhanced vocational development (38%). That such a relationship can exist and could be beneficial in both a short-term and long-term way perhaps needs to be stressed by orientation programs and advisors, as well as by recruiters during recruitment efforts of campus organizations.

The period after graduation is a time of transition and can be a demanding one emotionally. One of the commonly accepted goals of a college education is development of personal skills which empower individuals to cope successfully with the complex and demanding environment beyond the campus. UMCP graduates felt that this goal had largely been achieved. Over three-quarters of the UMCP graduates who completed the Graduate Survey reported substantial improvements in their level of self-confidence (81%) and in their feelings about themselves (78%). Most (88%) felt much more ready to go out on their own, and felt confident they could manage their life and the unexpected (87%). Fewer, however, saw substantial improvement in their control over their emotional outbursts (50%), their sensitivity to matters of personal wellness (66%) or their feelings of personal power (67%). An orientation course specifically designed for graduating seniors may be a way to help these students both anticipate some of the issues and situations they will be confronting after graduation, and increase the skills necessary to make those confrontations successful.

Nearly all (88%) of the UMCP graduates who completed the Graduate Survey reported they were satisfied with their overall college experience. Two-thirds (67%) agreed that they expected to be identified as alumni of UMCP. Over 90% reported it was likely they would return to the College Park campus in the twelve months after their graduation.

The majority of UMCP graduates remained in Maryland after graduation. Fifty-five percent of the UMCP graduates in the Representative Group, and 61% of the UMCP graduates in the Black Group reported that at the time they completed the Graduate Survey they were living within a 20 mile radius of the College Park campus. This suggests that Maryland citizens' tax dollars are being used to educate Maryland's future employees and citizens.

## V. CONCLUSION

As demonstrated by the data presented here, it is indeed a myth that most students who matriculate at UMCP and leave before completing the undergraduate degree do so because they are underprepared for the academic rigor of their degree programs and as a result cannot earn the grades necessary to remain enrolled. Significant numbers depart in good academic standing; that is, with a cumulative grade point average above the minimum needed for graduation. There is an array of issues involved in student departure before graduation, some of which are the responsibility of the University (course access, adequate advising) and some the responsibility of the students (motivation, personal investment, competing agendas). Efforts underway to improve the undergraduate experience at College Park are well directed.

Findings discussed in the present report suggest the importance of encouraging students (and their parents) to consider the potential benefits of on-campus living, such as the potential for developing and sustaining friendships with peers, easier access to adult members of the University community, and proximity to academic facilities and resources. Black students, particularly, appear to benefit by living on campus during the second half of their undergraduate career. The Office of Resident Life may want to consider means or policies that encourage upper level black students, who have not previously lived on campus, to consider doing so.

Further, this report suggests that sophomores are a population that deserves special attention. "Sophomore slump" is not only personally debilitating for the students, but also costs the institution potential graduates. Outreach programs designed to recognize the symptoms of sophomore slump—low self-confidence and frequent feelings of depression—may help students realize they are not alone and that the University is invested in their adjustment and continued presence.

In addition, it is worth noting that students experience the University of Maryland quite differently depending on their academic college or department. While some of the data presented here is dated because of the campus reorganization, the notion of looking at students' experiences in terms of this framework may make future research efforts more meaningful as well as shed added light on students' perceptions concerning aspects of their area of study.

Finally, recognizing the limitations of the present report (sample size, self-report, etc.) it is encouraging to note the highly positive evaluation most students gave of their years at College Park. As we continue to try and improve academic and non-academic opportunities for our students, it may be reassuring to realize that we are building on a generally strong base.

This is the final of the 16 Research Highlights prepared by the Division of Student Affairs to offer data-driven information helpful in understanding the behaviors and characteristics of the diverse students who matriculate at The University of Maryland at College Park. These reports have examined and discussed implications of the satisfactions and dissatisfactions, the strengths and shortcomings of undergraduate students, as well as some of the reasons for students' disappointments and successes. (See Appendix D.)

Today's students are informed consumers and have proven they will pursue their objectives and needs on other campuses or in other arenas if those objectives and needs cannot be satisfied here. We hope that the Research Highlights series provide the campus with empirically valid data about UMCP undergraduates that will be useful in the University's efforts to create a social, academic, and work environment that stimulates college student involvement, development, and appreciation.

## APPENDIX A

### ENROLLMENT PATTERNS AFTER DEPARTURE FROM UMCP BY ACADEMIC STANDING JUST PRIOR TO DEPARTURE

### Representative Group (N = 468)

| Semester of Departure | | Self-reported Subsequent Enrollment Status: Reenrolled at UMCP | Transferred Elsewhere | Non-Student | ? |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | % | % | % | % | % |
| **YEAR 1** | | | | | |
| ***after fall:*** | (N = 28) | | | | |
| in good standing | 54 | 0 | 47 | 62 | 33 |
| on probation | 46 | 0 | 0 | 62 | 38 |
| ***after spring:*** | (N = 58) | | | | |
| in good standing | 45 | 12 | 42 | 15 | 31 |
| on probation | 10 | 67 | 17 | 83 | 0 |
| dismissed | 45 | 0 | 58 | 27 | 15 |
| **YEAR 2** | | | | | |
| ***after fall:*** | (N = 35) | | | | |
| in good standing | 37 | 0 | 46 | 38 | 15 |
| on probation | 17 | 0 | 17 | 83 | 0 |
| dismissed | 46 | 0 | 44 | 6 | 50 |
| ***after spring:*** | (N = 53) | | | | |
| in good standing | 58 | 26 | 45 | 19 | 10 |
| on probation | 21 | 9 | 27 | 27 | 36 |
| dismissed | 21 | 0 | 45 | 45 | 9 |
| **YEAR 3** | | | | | |
| ***after fall:*** | (N = 17) | | | | |
| in good standing | 53 | 0 | 22 | 33 | 44 |
| on probation | 6 | 0 | 100 | 0 | 0 |
| dismissed | 41 | 0 | 0 | 71 | 28 |
| ***after spring:*** | (N = 24) | | | | |
| in good standing | 46 | 54 | 27 | 9 | 9 |
| on probation | 25 | 17 | 33 | 17 | 33 |
| dismissed | 29 | 14 | 28 | 43 | 14 |

## APPENDIX B

### ENROLLMENT PATTERNS AFTER DEPARTURE FROM UMCP BY ACADEMIC STANDING JUST PRIOR TO DEPARTURE

### Black Group (N = 339)

| Semester of Departure | | Self-reported Subsequent Enrollment Status: Reenrolled at UMCP | Transferred Elsewhere | Non-Student | ? |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | % | % | % | % | % |
| **YEAR 1** | | | | | |
| ***after fall:*** | (N = 35) | | | | |
| in good standing | 31 | 0 | 45 | 27 | 27 |
| on probation | 69 | 0 | 4 | 21 | 75 |
| ***after spring:*** | (N = 83) | | | | |
| in good standing | 20 | 24 | 41 | 12 | 24 |
| on probation | 17 | 50 | 36 | 14 | 0 |
| dismissed | 63 | 2 | 54 | 21 | 23 |
| **YEAR 2** | | | | | |
| ***after fall:*** | (N = 35) | | | | |
| in good standing | 26 | 0 | 22 | 56 | 22 |
| on probation | 26 | 0 | 22 | 22 | 56 |
| dismissed | 48 | 0 | 41 | 29 | 29 |
| ***after spring:*** | (N = 33) | | | | |
| in good standing | 42 | 0 | 50 | 7 | 43 |
| on probation | 27 | 11 | 33 | 11 | 44 |
| dismissed | 30 | 0 | 40 | 30 | 30 |
| **YEAR 3** | | | | | |
| ***after fall:*** | (N = 19) | | | | |
| in good standing | 21 | 0 | 25 | 0 | 75 |
| on probation | 42 | 0 | 12 | 25 | 62 |
| dismissed | 37 | 0 | 0 | 43 | 57 |
| ***after spring:*** | (N = 19) | | | | |
| in good standing | 32 | 17 | 50 | 17 | 17 |
| on probation | 32 | 17 | 17 | 0 | 67 |
| dismissed | 36 | 43 | 28 | 28 | 0 |

## APPENDIX C

### UMCP GRADUATES' RETROSPECTIVE ASSESSMENTS BY DIVISION (in percents)

| | AGLS | MPSE | BSOS | A&H | HCR |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| decided on major: | | | | | |
| junior yr. h.s. | 62 | 40 | 24 | 30 | 28 |
| senior yr. h.s. | 21 | 36 | 37 | 33 | 31 |
| freshman yr. | 4 | 12 | 18 | 19 | 20 |
| after freshman yr. | 12 | 11 | 21 | 17 | 20 |
| no shifts in major | 43 | 56 | 28 | 33 | 38 |
| no registration problems | 71 | 50 | 53 | 63 | 52 |
| # students in class was satisfying | 57 | 26 | 37 | 60 | 52 |
| satisfied with nonmajor/coursework | 50 | 72 | 68 | 59 | 45 |
| satisfied with major/coursework | 86 | 81 | 74 | 69 | 76 |
| quality instruction was satisfying | 79 | 69 | 63 | 77 | 66 |
| faculty carefully prepared | 64 | 53 | 54 | 56 | 69 |
| access to faculty was satisfying | 29 | 19 | 30 | 32 | 43 |
| know no faculty well enough | 7 | 22 | 12 | 10 | 7 |
| would recommend major | 57 | 72 | 66 | 54 | 55 |

## APPENDIX D

### MARYLAND LONGITUDINAL STUDY RESEARCH HIGHLIGHTS

#1 A Descriptive Overview: The Study's Purpose, Goals, Features, Participants, and Design

#2 Understanding and Increasing Students' Satisfaction With College

#3 The Freshman Experience at UMCP: Comparing Commuter and Resident Students

#4 Students Who Transfer from UMCP: Who Are They? Why Do They Leave? Where Do They Go?

#5 Students Who Become Nonpersisters: Who, When, Why and to Do What?

#6 Students Who Transfer from UMCP: Do They Find What They Are Looking For?

#7 College Student Employment: Patterns and Profiles

#8 Students' Perceptions of Campus Services

#9 The Astin Index: One Approach to Predicting Persistence at UMCP Four Years After Initial Enrollment

#10 The UMCP Academic Experience

#11 Comparing MLS Participants and Non-participants

#12 Career Development and Its Academic Correlates

#13 Commuters and Residents: Longitudinal Similarities and Differences

#14 The Undergraduate Experience of Students Who Graduate

#15 The Black Student Experience at UMCP

#16 The UMCP Graduate Perspective

To obtain a copy of any of these reports, write:

Maryland Longitudinal Study
University of Maryland at College Park
2108 Mitchell Building
College Park, Maryland 20742

## END NOTE

1. As is described more fully in MLS Research Highlight #1: A DESCRIPTIVE OVERVIEW, participants in the Maryland Longitudinal Study (MLS) form two groups. The Representative Group (N = 468) is a random sample of the entering class of freshmen at UMCP in the fall of 1980. The Black Group (N = 339) is comprised of all black students entering UMCP as freshmen in the fall of 1980 who agreed to participate in the study.